

12 July 2006

To: SCMS Selection Committee, Pedagogy Award 2007

From: Ellen Seiter, USC

Re: Chuck Kleinhans nomination

I worked with Chuck at Northwestern University from 1976-1981. We talk a lot these days about lifelong learning, but Chuck exemplifies lifelong mentoring. For twenty-five years, he has inspired me, encouraged me, generously shared ideas and resources, and of course worked tirelessly to improve other people's writing through his editorship of JumpCut. One of the richest parts of my experience of knowing Chuck has been gaining new ideas about course design, integrating theory and practice, new uses of the Internet and multimedia and a vast number of innovative exercises for classroom use that help students understand their own identities in terms of class, race and sexuality. The opportunity to watch Chuck's teaching and mentorship, and to understand how much can be accomplished by teachers through kindness and a willingness to experiment with new pedagogical practices was the single greatest gift of my entire professional life.

I was one of the earliest in a long line of feminist media scholars who benefited from Chuck's teaching and mentorship. Chuck taught the first course at Northwestern University devoted entirely to feminist film scholarship around 1977. He was the key mentor to the group who organized the "Feminar" reading group, the Lolita Raclin Rogers Memorial conference and the Film Reader issue on Feminist film criticism in 1980.

I had entered graduate school at the age of nineteen, and the pursuit of a Ph.D. had never occurred to me before Chuck's encouragement. I will never forget the day that Chuck showed up for our first independent study to develop a dissertation topic with two shopping bags full of books from his personal library—which he gave me on indefinite loan. Chuck found the unique gifts and interests of each of his students, and has brought many people into the profession who never would have recognized themselves as possessing the kind of cultural capital worthy of advanced intellectual work. His stupendous work as a dissertation advisor included many who have made major contributions to cinema and media studies, including Jane Gaines, Charlotte Herzog, Ramona Curry, Chris Straayer, Gina Marchetti, Jyotsna Kapur and a dozen others). Chuck furthered the field of feminist criticism by painstakingly developing the work of young scholars and published a wide array of work on gender and queer studies far ahead of its time. All of these factors make his contribution to the development of feminist media theory and criticism profound.

At Northwestern, Chuck and I developed with Michelle Citron an innovative production curriculum blending theory and practice. This course, Creative Processes in Sight and Sound, has been a model for programs throughout the country as an undergrad curriculum that blends production with critical studies. . Chuck cultivated this curriculum, putting multimedia at the core of the course a decade before other universities. His impact on young filmmakers and new media practitioners is vast. This commitment to production pedagogy is very rare indeed, for a scholar with such a vast record of editorial and publication work.

When I was the only woman student in the MFA program at Northwestern, Chuck's wit and sensitivity to gender issues made it possible for me to survive an environment in which constant techie competitions among the male students and other male instructors (using stopwatches to time who could make splices fastest, etc.) often left me feeling utterly inadequate.

His constant presence as an outspoken advocate for underrepresented students has allowed many of us to pursue production who would not otherwise have endured the sometimes alienating aspects of film and video production classrooms.

For his brilliant and innovative teaching, and his deep commitment to working class students, to LGBT students, and to students of color, I can think of no one in the organization more deserving of this award.

Sincerely,

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